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Abstract

The first part of this paper is a summary of Peterson's research dcne on the student protest movement. In 1965, questicnnaires were sent to deans of students at all 1,000 accredited four year colleges in the country. The 1968 survey was conducted in the same manner with new issues substituted in the questionnaire. Results of both surveys included the following about the student movement: (1) relatively small minorities of students are involved, (2) protests vary among institutions, (3) off campus issues are less frequent in the South, and (4) organized protest is more com on at large universities. Other studies are mentioned, and scale descripticns, and correlatiens for the Institutional Functioning Inventory are given. The Special Ccmmittee on Campus Tensions has recently been formed. The committee's areas of concentration include: (1) mcdern interpretatiens of the histcry and philosophy of dissent, (2) the study of the breakdcwn of authcrity in American life, (3) the dynamics of institutional change, (4) institutional government, and (5) effective communication in complex organizations. A plea for all informatien relevant tc these areas is made. A seccnd plea is made, to become involved in promcting nonviolent ways of dissent. (KJ)

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THE STUDENT PROTEST MOVEMENT: SOME FACTS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND A PLEA[1]

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I would like to divide this paper into two unequal and quite distinct parts. In the first, I will try to summarize the research I've done on the student protest movement and its correlates. In the second I would like to discuss some things that are on my mind by virtue of my work as Staff Director for the recently established Special Committee on Campus Tensions (of which Brewster Smith, our discussant, is a member).

First the research. Let me begin by describing two roughly comparable national surveys of organized student protest that I carried out--the first in 1965, the second in 1968. The academic year 1964-1965 probably marked the beginning of serious, organized student protest directed against the university. As we all know, the Free Speech Movement erupted at the University of California at Berkeley in the fall of 1964, a year that has turned out to be truly a watershed in the recent history of American higher education. Scattered other student uprisings that year combined with extensive coverage in the mass media lead to the beginnings of public unease about the situation on the campus. At any rate, in the spring of 1965 I was struck by the need for some reasonably accurate information on a national scale about what looked like a social phenomenon of more than passing significance. I sent a questionnaire to the deans of students at all 1000 accredited four-year colleges in the country, asking them to indicate for each of 27 issues whether there had been organized

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protest the past academic year and if so, what percentage of the student body was involved.[2]

The second survey, carried out in the late spring of 1968, was identical to the earlier study, with the exception that several new issues were substituted for matters that were judged not to have been important causes of protest during the academic year 1967-1968.[3] Dow Chemical recruiters on campus would be an example of a "new" issue. Response rates on both surveys were close to 85 percent.

One purpose of these surveys, as I said, was to document a social fact. Another purpose was to provide interested people, especially college and university leaders, with something of a perspective on what was taking place. Thus I had hoped that people on a given campus might look back on the past year, and consider what had happened or not happened on their campus in relation to the national data, and then perhaps begin to do some serious thinking about what the student protest movement would and should mean for their campus. The data from the two surveys made a number of things about the student movement quite clear. For example:

1. Relatively small minorities of students--ranging from two to ten percent, depending on the issue--were generally actively involved in protests, and issues bearing on college controls on the personal lives of students, e.g., dormitory or student dress regulations, stirred up larger numbers of students than educational issues or even off-campus issues such as the Vietnam war or civil rights.

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[2] Peterson, R.E., The Scope of Organized Student Protest in 1964-1965. Princeton, N.J.: Educational Testing Service, 1966.

[3] Peterson, R.E., The Scope of Organized Student Protest in 1967-1968. Princeton, N.J.: Educational Testing Service, 1966.

2. There are very large differences in the extent of student protest according to type of institution. For most issues, protest was most frequent at the independent and public universities and least frequent, quite infrequent in fact, at the Catholic and Protestant affiliated colleges and at the vocationally oriented institutions.

3. Campus protest over off-campus issues such as the war, the draft, civil rights, etc. is less frequent in the South than elsewhere in the country.

4. Organized protest occurred much more frequently on the large, rather than small campus.

5. Student Left groups such as SDS were functioning on one-fourth of the campuses in 1965 and at one-half of the colleges in 1968.

6. And the surveys also provided people with an idea about the relative significance nationally of various issues. In 1965, civil rights, dormitory regulations, and food service led the list. In 1968, the Vietnam war, dormitory regulations, and student participation in campus governance, in that order, were the major issues. Black student activism was reported on roughly one in five colleges during the year.

One problem with surveys like these is that the descriptions they provide rapidly become obsolete. The radical movement won't stand still. A kind of study that probably has somewhat more permanence is one that looks at relationships, say, between the fact of protest and other relevant variables. (Some relationships, of course, were illuminated by the surveys--between protest and size and type of institution, for example.)

In the interim between the two surveys, two colleagues at ETS, Masu Sasajima and J. A. Davis, and I, did a correlational study involving, for

109 colleges, the protest data from the 1965 survey and the scales in the College and University Environment Scales, or CUES, an instrument developed by C. Robert Pace at UCLA.[4] With CUES, students report their perceptions of the climate of the college in terms of dimensions labeled Practicality, Community, Awareness, Propriety, and Scholarship.[5] Summarizing quickly, the combination of the Awareness and Propriety scales, Propriety weighted negatively, gave a multiple correlation of .63 with civil rights protest as the criterion; and Awareness and Community (the latter weighted negatively) yielded a multiple of .71 with Vietnam war protest. We also found, however, that CUES was not predictive of protest over internal campus problems and issues--like the quality of instruction, paternalistic regulations, student participation in decision making, and so forth.

Again in the interest of continuities in social research, a fourth study I want to mention is in a number of ways comparable to the third one just described. Using the same analytic strategy (zero order and multiple correlation), and a sample of 50 colleges, John Centra and I are looking at relationships between protest data from the 1968 survey and a new set of predictors--the scales in a new instrument known as the Institutional Functioning Inventory.

Under development for several years by Rod Hartnett, Centra and myself, the IFI relies primarily on faculty to obtain measures of a number of institutional functions and orientations. The inventory consists of eleven 12-item scales; their reliabilities--coefficient alphas for college means--range between .84 and .96. Brief definitions of these measures are as follows:

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[4] Sasajima, Masu, Davis, J. A., & Peterson, R.E., Organized student protest and institutional climate. American Educational Research Journal, 1968, 5, 291-304.

[5] Practicality: the degree to which the environment is structured and orderly, where rules and procedures are important, and where interest in ideas for their own sake tend to be deemphasized.

BRIEF DEFINITIONS OF SCALES IN THE INSTITUTIONAL FUNCTIONING INVENTORY

(IAE) Intellectual-Aesthetic Extracurriculum refers to the availability of activities and opportunities for intellectual and aesthetic stimulation outside the classroom.

(F) Freedom has to do with academic freedom for faculty and students as well as freedom in their personal lives for all individuals in the campus community.

(HD) Human Diversity has to do with the degree to which the faculty and student body are heterogeneous in their backgrounds and present attitudes.

(IS) Concern for Improvement of Society refers to a desire among people at the institution to apply their knowledge and skills in solving social problems and prompting social change in America.

(UL) Concern for Undergraduate Learning has to do with the degree in which the college--in its structure, function, and professional commitment of faculty--emphasizes undergraduate teaching and learning.

(DG) Democratic Governance has to do with the extent to which individuals in the campus community who are directly affected by a decision have the opportunity to participate in making the decision.

(MLN) Meeting Local Needs refers to an institutional emphasis on providing educational and cultural opportunities for all adults in the surrounding area, as well as meeting needs for trained manpower on the part of local businesses and government agencies.

(SP) Self-Study and Planning has to do with the importance college leaders attach to continuous long-range planning for the total institution, and to institutional research needed in formulating and revising plans.

(AK) Concern for Advancing Knowledge has to do with the degree to which the institution--in its structure, function, and professional commitment of faculty--emphasize research and scholarship aimed at extending the scope of human knowledge.

(CI) Concern for Innovation refers, in its highest form, to an institutionalized commitment to experimentation with new ideas for educational practice.

(IE) Institutional Esprit refers to a sense of shared purposes and high morale among faculty and administrators.

Table 1 contains a matrix of product-moment correlations between the eleven IFI scales and reported incidence of organized student protest over each of 27 issues. Only correlations of .20 or higher are given. The protest data were gathered in the summer of 1968; the IFI information, in February and March of the same year. There are a number of interesting, if not altogether surprising, patterns in the Table 1 data. For example, all the correlations involving the Undergraduate Learning (UL) scale are negative, meaning that colleges that stress or do a good job teaching undergraduates seldom experience organized protest. Democratic Governance (the DG scale) tends to be associated with satisfaction with, or lack of protest against, the college, but with protest over off-campus issues (the war, civil rights, and so forth)--a situation liberal administrators might consider to be ideal. A group of scales which tend to define the large multiversity--Human Diversity (HD), Improvement of Society (IS), Advancement of Knowledge (AK), and Intellectual-Aesthetic Extracurriculum (IAE)--all tend to be positively related to campus activism, especially protest arising from the off-campus issues.

As we had done in the earlier study with CUES, the 27 protest issues were grouped, on the basis of a prior factor analysis, into a smaller number of protest criterion measures. In this present study the 27 issues were reduced to seven scales that were labeled Unconcern with Teaching, Instruction and Curriculum, Faculty Affairs, Politically Extremist Visitors, Administrative Paternalism, Student Power, and New Left Issues.

Community: the degree to which a warm, cohesive atmosphere is emphasized and where there are close relationships between students and faculty and among students.

Awareness: the degree to which interest in philosophy, the arts, and the national and international affairs give evidence of personal awareness in relation to society.

Propriety: the degree to which proper forms and conventions are emphasized, where good manners are evident, and where there tends to be an absence of unconventional behavior.

Scholarship: the degree to which the pursuit of knowledge and ideas and the attainment of scholarly achievement are highly valued.

TABLE 1

CORRELATIONS BETWEEN IFI SCALES AND INCIDENCE
OF STUDENT PROTEST OVER VARIOUS ISSUES IN 1967-1968
(50 institutions)

		IAE	F	HD	IS	UL	DG	MLN	SP	AK	CI	IE
1.	Class size	30	20	34	41	-37				51		
2.	Senior faculty absent		25	31	32	-43				60		
3.	Quality of instruction				22	-40	-24			33		
4.	Testing and grading					-37	-25	22		29		
5.	Curriculum inflexibility					-23					-21	
6.	Academic freedom											
7.	Tenure policies		-26				-32				-24	
8.	Controversial instructor		24	41	28			23		-22		-32
9.	Alleged censorship						-33	21			-29	-20
10.	Rules: controv. visitors		-40									
11.	Visits by leftists	23										
12.	Visits by rightists	22			28	-23				33		
13.	Living group regulations						-25					
14.	Food service	-28				-25	-22					
15.	Dress regulations		-38	-21			-39				-26	-26
16.	Drinking regulations										-20	
17.	Drug regulations		21				20					
18.	Disciplinary actions			25		-25						-32
19.	Alleged racial discrim.	29	22	32	35	-36				32		
20.	Stud-admin. communication					-26	-22				-25	-25
21.	Stud. partic. in governance			26	27	-36				21		-21
22.	Civil rights		34	43	50	-20				34	20	
23.	The draft	42	36	44	54		40			42	29	
24.	Armed services recruiters	20	31	45	29		24					
25.	Other recruiters: Dow, etc.		43	61	51	-31	26			40		
26.	Vietnam	42	31	50	65		35			41	34	
27.	Classified research	33		37	40	-40				55		

Multiple correlations were statistically significant for three of the seven protest criteria--New Left (mainly war-related) Issues, Unconcern with Teaching (which contained the classified-research-on-campus item), and the Faculty Affairs measure (student protest stemming from, say, a negative rehire decision or the behavior of a "controversial" professor). Only in the last instance, Faculty Affairs, however, did the use of multiple predictors materially improve the prediction. The highest zero order correlation with the Faculty Affairs criterion, as one might expect, involved the Institutional Esprit (IE) scale--a rather modest -.34. However, adding the Improvement of Society, (IS), Advancement of Knowledge (AK), and Undergraduate Learning (UL) scales, with all but IS weighted negatively, yielded a multiple correlation of .74. This particular pattern of institutional characteristics suggests a seriously demoralized campus, where the faculty believe that the college may not be doing anything particularly well. Perhaps the institution is in transition or for some other reason is unclear about its purposes. Such a climate could easily give rise to open faculty conflicts, in which students could be expected to take sides. Are there such institutions, or are we speaking only of a statistical figment?

In view of the ability of the IFI to predict the two categories of protest arising totally or in part from off-campus issues, and only one of the five clearly campus-issue protest criteria, I come to the same general conclusion that was drawn from the earlier study--that protest over off-campus issues is more readily predictable than protest over campus conditions. As a general explanatory hypothesis, I would suggest that New Left militance, which has tended to focus on conditions external to the campus, is almost entirely a function of the values of the students involved. Indeed, Astin has shown Vietnam and civil rights protest behavior to be quite predictable on the basis of personal characteristics of the protesting students.[6]

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[6] Astin, A. W., Personal and environmental determinants of student activism, Measurement and Evaluation in Guidance, 1968, 1, 149-161.

By contrast, campus-issue protest is determined not only by students' values, but also by a host of college policies, practices, personalities, and the like. Because of its relative causal complexity, the incidence of protest over campus conditions is less amenable to statistical prediction than student Left protest directed at broad social issues.

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So much for the research. Let me begin this last part with a few words about the recently established Special Committee on Campus Tensions. The Committee was created in response to an awareness, rather belated perhaps, of both the escalation of hostilities on the campus and the mounting political backlash off the campus. In its reports, it will urge the nation's colleges to accelerate reforms directed at the on-campus causes of unrest, and to improve mechanisms for self-regulation and for timely yet just response in the event of serious disruption. We hope our efforts will be understood by people in public life as an earnest effort by the academic community to manage its own affairs. We intend, however, to impress upon people in public life, once again, the clear fact that campus unrest springs in very large part from a consciousness on the part of hundreds of thousands of students that there is great injustice in American society, and that our national priorities are grossly wrong.

If I may I'd like to take this opportunity to ask for your help. The Special Committee plans to center its deliberations and recommendations on a fairly wide range of topics, many of which fall within the general purview of psychology--especially social psychology--and the other social sciences.

What I'd like to do is list some of the areas in which we intend to concentrate, and then issue an appeal to the social science community to send me available materials relevant to these concerns.

1. Modern interpretations of the history and philosophy of dissent, civil disobedience, and revolt.

2. The breakdown of authority in American life, to include analyses of emerging bases of legitimacy.

3. The dynamics of institutional change; to focus especially on factors affecting an institution's ability to respond to the need for change.

4. Institutional governance; especially models based on a commonality of interests rather than factionalism.

5. Effective communication in complex organizations.

If you have recent papers bearing on these topics, or have access to relevant work of other people, I would hope you could forward these materials to me, care of the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C.

The second plea I would like to make to the social science community, and many of you will not be sympathetic, is that those of you who are on campuses become involved in efforts to head off violence at your institution. Moreso than most other academics, people in the social sciences, especially psychologists, ought to possess the skills and sensitivities necessary to spot sources of potential conflict and to help conflicting groups reach satisfactory accomodations. I urge you to work with student and faculty groups toward making their actions essentially nonviolent. I'm not speaking about a de-escalation of goals, only a de-escalation in tactics. Come out of your laboratories and discover that your institution desperately needs your help. I'm absolutely convinced that this will be a critical year for the American university. If very many colleges erupt with the violence of Berkeley, Columbia, or Harvard, no number of blue-ribbon committees will be able to prevent a backlash that potentially could crush the university as a functioning intellectual enterprise.